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PURGE OF STALINISM

There is never a dull moment in my job as Director of Central Intelligence. Events which seem to defy analysis happen somewhere in the world every day. Few trends seem to follow a predictable course.

These last few weeks there have been developments in the Soviet Union which have puzzled all the experts who generally have ready answers -- sometimes more ready than accurate -- to explain Soviet conduct.

Just at a time when some are saying that everything is going wrong with foreign policy in the Free World countries but that everything in the Soviet Union is progressing according to some great master design, the Soviet collective leadership, as they call it, comes forward to beat their collective breasts and indulge in the most extreme self criticism.

The men in the Kremlin now tell us that all they said earlier about events in the USSR during the 20 years preceding Stalin's death ^{is} ~~are~~ quite wrong; that in fact this was an era of infamy, crime, and shame. They admit that their past adulation of Stalin was based on fear not on fact. The man they themselves used to call the "glorious Stalin, genius of mankind" is now being publicly accused of "grave errors" and privately described as a malicious monster.

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The Soviet leaders do not very clearly explain why the new collective leaders waited for three years after Stalin's death to tell it to their people. They do not make a very satisfactory showing as to why they themselves sat acquiescent in the seats of the mighty during all the period of Stalin's dictatorship, exercising great powers as members of his inner circle.

Possibly, as Khrushchev is reported to have admitted, the price of non-conformity was a bullet in the head. This is a very human excuse but a poor qualification for high office on the part of those who now assert the rights and prerogatives of leadership. In the Free World, where we aspire to build on the great traditions of the past, not to repudiate them, we revere as our heroes and leaders those who refused to conform, whatever the risks, when the principles of liberty were at stake.

In the USSR, evidently, acquiescing in crime as the price of simple survival under a political tyrant is sanctioned as legitimate conduct. As they put it: "The point was not to save one's own life; the point was to save the revolution."

Before going further into the details of this strange development in the Soviet Union it may be worth while to review briefly what had been taking place there during the years of Stalin's power. Here we may find clues as to why the men in the Kremlin now take the serious risks of repudiating their late hero for having put the individual above party and substituting a personal dictatorship for a collective one.

Stalin himself ran through a series of revolutionary combinations, akin to somewhat collective leaderships, during the 1920's. For example, in 1924-25 he combined with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky. From 1925-27, a new alliance between Stalin, Bukharin and Rykov was formed and routed a Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev combination. And finally, from 1927-29, Stalin worked with Molotov, Voroshilov, Mikoyan, and others to crush Stalin's recent allies, Bukharin and Rykov.

It was during the ten years which preceded Russia's entry into World War II that Stalin completed the consolidation of his control over the Communist party machinery. By that time he had placed his loyal stooges in all important positions of authority throughout the Soviet Union and the Army was brought under political control.

Among the major charges said to have been leveled against Stalin by Khrushchev, is the charge that in the late 'thirties he deliberately liquidated Marshal Tukhachevsky and thousands of the best officers in the Soviet Army, presumably to insure his political control of the military apparatus. Certainly today there is good reason to believe that Marshal Tukhachevsky was falsely accused of conniving with the Germans. There is some evidence that there was a clever German plot to discredit Tukhachevsky, which happened to fit in with Stalin's own plans.

We do know that during and after the war there was burning resentment among the Soviets professional soldiers at Stalin's interference in the conduct of the war, his unjust and capricious belittling of heroes such as Zhukov and his arrogant claims to personal credit for Soviet victories.

A senior Soviet general, for example, is recently reported as having privately branded their so-called documentary film, "The Fall of Berlin," which shows Stalin as the great military master mind, as a "tissue of lies."

Today the collective dictatorship is assiduously repairing the injured dignity of the military and incorporating its leadership into Communist Party membership. They must realize that, following the usual pattern of revolutions, the military leaders might tire of being the pawn of dictators, whether individual or collective.

But whatever the faults of Stalin in the pre-war decade, one can hardly ascribe them to his old age or senility. Stalin was then in his prime. Furthermore one can hardly believe that the acts of the dictator in a war from which he emerged as a hero, are the motivating causes for the present attempt to liquidate his memory. In fact, the most recent Soviet pronouncements are tending to refer to "good" and "bad" Stalin eras. Naturally, there is no desire to repudiate such measures as farm collectivization and the rapid industrialization under the Five Year Plans, which are so closely associated with his name. The beginning of the "bad" period was in 1934 when the great Stalin purges began. If they denounce his war record, the purpose here must be to eliminate him from the hero class and to give the military some of the credit he had arrogated to himself.

But to find the real reasons for the de-Stalinization campaign, we must, I believe, look to the more recent past, particularly to the hard autocratic period during the last six or seven years of Stalin's life. Here we find two major motivations for cutting away from Stalin worship.

Internationally, from about 1947 onward to the time of his death, Stalin's, often bellicose, policy in the international field had been a failure and had tended to unite the Free World against international communism. Domestically during this period his police state was meeting ever increasing disfavor, not only with the helpless people, but with the top politicians, generals, and industrial managers who were essential to the working of the Soviet system. This began to create problems for the regime.

First, let us look at the international picture. In the immediate post-war era, riding the crest of the common victory and maintaining military strength and power, Soviet policy had notable successes. It consolidated the grip on the European satellites and helped the Chinese Communists to victory.

But beginning with about 1947 in Europe, somewhat later in Asia, the Free World at last began to realize the implications of the forward drive of international communism and started to take counter measures, and the tide began to turn.

What happened in these years? The Marshall Plan, which Stalin and Molotov indignantly rejected and tried to defeat, was put into effect and Europe was saved from economic chaos. In Greece, the Soviet effort to take over by guerrilla tactics was thwarted.

When the Soviet attempted to take over Berlin and destroy this outpost of Western freedom, the Berlin blockade was frustrated by the air lift and West Berlin remains a show-window of what the Free World can do. Tito survived his ejection from the Cominform and the wrath of Stalin and struck

back with telling criticisms of Stalinist policy -- almost identical with what Soviet leaders are now themselves saying.

Later the North Atlantic Alliance was organized and despite Soviet threats the way was opened for German rearmament in close union with the West.

Thus frustrated in the European field Stalin turned to the Far East and, working with the North Korean and Chinese Communists, attempted to take over Korea as the first step towards driving America from the Western Pacific. Again the Communists were blocked and, most important of all, an alarmed and awakened American public opinion proceeded to the defensive rearmament of this country. Our nuclear power was vastly increased.

It is understandable that Stalin's successors should have found it convenient to place upon him the blame for Greece, Berlin, Korea, Yugoslavia, German rearmament and the like, and in particular, for the generally hard Soviet line which has led to the buildup of American defense forces and NATO. It was these successes which led the Soviet Union to conclude that a peace treaty with Austria was necessary to build up their badly shattered reputation as peace mongers and to prepare the way for a summit conference, their pilgrimage of penitence to Belgrade, and their effort to line the Socialist parties into new popular fronts.

But the foreign scene, alone, by no means explains the urge the present Kremlin leaders felt to break with the hard Stalinist past. They were already making progress in allowing the memory of Stalin to fade in international recognition and prestige without going to the extreme of total

destruction of the Stalin myth with their own people. Thus the clue to their present policy lies more in the internal Soviet situation than in the requirements of their foreign policy.

Domestically they have been caught in a dilemma. In order to compete with the Western world in the fields of science and industry which was vitally important for their economic growth and their rearmament program, it was essential for the Soviet to speed up the education of their people, especially in the scientific and technical field. After Stalin's death the regime encouraged more objectivity in scientific inquiry, and put on the shelf some pseudo scientists such as Lysenko. After all they had found out early in the game that in the present nuclear age one could not fool around with scientists who tailored their art to the whims of Marxism.

Obviously, the Soviet leaders could not limit their educational processes to the scientific fields and more and more young men and women are graduating from schools, which correspond to our high schools and colleges, and are taking advanced degrees comparable to our degrees of Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy. Even with all the indoctrination in Communist teachings which they give to their young students it is impossible to prevent education from developing the critical faculties which every thinking human being possesses.

Furthermore, as part of their new campaign of sweetness and light, they have found it wise to take down some of the bars which have impeded travel between the Soviet Union and the free countries; and while the Iron Curtain still remains and there is a careful selective process as to those

who are permitted to leave the Soviet Union or to visit it, it is obvious that today there is far more contact between the people of the USSR and outside countries than at any time in recent years.

All this has tended to build up pressures upon the Soviet rulers to create an impression not only internationally but also domestically, that a dictatorship of the Stalin type was dead forever.

The Soviet leaders are trying to meet their external and internal dilemmas by finding a convenient "devil" which they can use to explain away past Soviet sins to the world abroad and to their own people as well as to demonstrate that the present rulers of the Soviet are different mentally and morally than they were under Stalin. Thus they hope that their own people will accept their protestations that the days of government by arbitrary policy-making, secret trials, deportations, and prison camps are over. Furthermore, they are again promising that they will do something to raise the standard of living so that the promise of individual freedom will be seasoned with a greater share of consumers goods and a more abundant life.

The extent of the opposition to the Stalinist type regime must have been gauged by the Kremlin as far stronger and deeper among the Russian people than we had dared to hope. Nonetheless, the destruction of the Stalin myth carries with it a very real threat to the internal discipline and unity of the Soviet Communist Party and the international Communist movement.

That calculated risk must have been taken deliberately by men who knew they had to have a scapegoat, if they were to hope to preserve the

dictatorship on which their own power and very survival rested. By attacking the personal symbol of Stalin and the worst excesses of his rule, they hope to be able to preserve many of the essentials of the Stalinist system, now labelling it Leninism, the monopoly of all power by a single party, the complete subordination of the courts and individual rights to arbitrary party decree, the governmental control of the press and of all organs of public information.

This basic structure is meant to be preserved intact. Already the regime has publicly warned that some "rotten elements" have taken the de-Stalinization campaign too literally and are "trying to question the correctness of the Party's policy." This, Pravda thundered, is "petty bourgeois licentiousness" of a kind the "Party has never tolerated and will never tolerate." A dead and dishonored Stalin, therefore, is likely to be merely a device -- here possibly a Trojan corpse rather than a Trojan horse -- with which the long suffering Russian people are, I fear, to be deceived in their expectation of a freer and better life.

Obviously the Soviet rulers concluded that it would take something more than a mere repetition of the old cliches to have any effect. Apparently the necessity was deemed to be urgent and impelling. They had tried to do the trick with the liquidation of Beria but the secrecy surrounding his execution was hardly a persuasive bit of evidence of a new dawn of liberty. It was in the worst tradition of the Stalin era -- and he, after all, generally gave his victims at least a drumhead public trial.

The degradation of Stalin, if the Soviet program had worked as the leaders had apparently planned it, was to be under strict party discipline. But it seems to have got out of hand. When Khrushchev briefed the party leaders assembled at the XX Congress in Moscow at a secret meeting on February 25th, the representatives of foreign Communist parties were excluded, but the party leaders from all parts of the USSR were there. They were to take the gospel by word of mouth to the local precinct leaders. What was planned, apparently, was a gradual process of burying the dead leader's memory. Different medicine was to be reserved for the faithful followers of Stalin in the satellites, each according to their needs.

Something may have gone wrong with this careful planning. It is possible that difficult questions were posed by those party workers who had been taught for decades to worship Stalin and who knew that Khrushchev, Bulganin and the whole Politburo owed their positions to him. On the other hand, Khrushchev may have deliberately planned to give the Party the "Shock" treatment to give more conviction to the "new men" and "new times" theory.

At any rate, whatever may have been the plan, the reports are unanimous, as published in the press of every free country, without effective denial from Moscow, that Khrushchev ended up by branding Stalin not only as a heartless dictator but as a tyrant and murderer, an incompetent military leader whose bungling in both war and peace had brought the Soviet Union to the verge of ruin. In the same breath, Stalin, the leading theoretician of Communism for the past 25 years, was labelled a heretic and his interpretations of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy were rejected.

It may be well at this point to consider the position and character of the men who have now brought these charges. All of them had been for many long years prominently associated with Stalin's policies. Some had been his hatchet men in many of the less savory acts of his chequered career. Certainly no leader in history ever took such elaborate precautions as Stalin to insure that the men around him were loyal beyond the shadow of a doubt. That his henchmen, now that he is dead, so bitterly repudiated Stalin is a commentary on the totalitarian system of government itself and the leaders it breeds.

The main attack on Stalin's record was made by the Party Secretary, Nikita Khrushchev. He had held key jobs under Stalin since 1935, and had organized and carried through, for Stalin, the purges in the Ukraine. In January of 1938, he was named as alternate member of the Politburo and has been a full member of that body since 1939. Without wavering, he followed the Stalinist lines and on the Dictator's 70th birthday, December 21, 1949, he had this to say:

"Hail to the father, sage teacher, and brilliant leader of the Party, the Soviet people, and the toilers of all the world, Comrade Stalin."

The number two man in the anti-Stalin crusade has been Anastas Mikoyan. In fact he was the first at the recent XX Congress to criticize Stalin by name. Mikoyan held key jobs under Stalin for approximately 30 years. Stalin installed him as commissar of trade and made him candidate member of the Politburo in 1926, when Mikoyan was 31--the youngest person ever to attain Politburo rank. He has adjusted to every turn of the Soviet policy line and remained in the front political ranks ever since.

Others who have been parties to this great debunking exercise were, of course, Bulganin, who had worked with Stalin since 1931; Kaganovich, who had been at his side since 1924; Malenkov, who had been a member of his personal secretariat for some 25 years, whose career was made by Stalin, and finally, Molotov, the longest Stalin associate of them all. He had worked with the Dictator since about 1912 in the early days of the illegal Communist conspiracy.

There is good reason to believe that Molotov has joined the ranks of Stalin detractors with reluctance. Certainly a Stalinist at heart, he must have viewed recent events with a heavy heart and with the knowledge that the recent deviations of which he has been openly accused are a prelude to his gradual retirement from the duties of his office. I incline to believe that Molotov's real sentiments are those he expressed at Stalin's grave and then more recently when, after Malenkov's demotion in 1954, he exuberantly reaffirmed his faith in Stalinist principles.

All of these men, while they now find it convenient to disassociate themselves from the dead tyrant, show no intention of accepting the normal consequences of long association with a repudiated leader and a discredited policy nor of relinquishing the benefits they acquired under Stalin and the power which they are now enjoying as his pupils and successors.

The leaders of the Soviet Union today are walking a dangerous tightrope. They are trying to discredit Stalin without discrediting the Communist Party, which he led so long, or the men who worked with him. Human memories are short and perhaps they may succeed in this maneuver. But surely many a Communist will question the good faith of these leaders. The reversal is too abrupt to invite confidence. After all, it was only a little over three years ago, on March 9, 1953, that Stalin was buried. At that time these men who are now castigating him joined in the most lavish tribute and they brought together in Moscow the Communist leaders of China and the European satellites to do him homage.

This is what his short-time heir, Georgi Malenkov, had to say:

"The policy of Stalin will live for ages and thankful posterity will praise his name just as we do. x x x Comrade Stalin, a great thinker of our epoch, creatively developed in new historical conditions the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. Stalin's name justly stands with the names of the greatest people in all the history of mankind--Marx--Engles--Lenin."

The Chinese Communists and the Moscow-designated rulers of the European Satellites who attended Stalin's funeral must now have some question in their minds today as to the forthrightness of the present Kremlin leaders who induced them to join in this homage. Recently, the Chinese Communists spent several weeks before publishing their acceptance of Moscow views of the late Soviet Dictator.

Certainly it is not for us to defend the Stalinist dictatorship, its cruelties and perversions as against its present detractors. We do have a right, however, to question the sincerity of those who today tell us that for 20 years and more they were a party to foisting on the world a tissue of lies and deceit.

Their sincerity is basically to be questioned on three counts. First, they have been willing to criticize and condemn only carefully selected faults of the Stalin regime. They have specifically endorsed acts that both within Russia and in the world at large caused the most widespread and terrible human suffering; for example, the deliberate starvation of the Russian peasantry during the collectivization campaign of the early 30's;

and the exploitation of the captive peoples of the Eastern European satellites, where proud and independent nations were crushed in defiance of solemn international obligations. Mikoyan at the 20th Congress even had the effrontery to boast of the Czech coup as an example of how Communist parties can come to power by "peaceful" and "parliamentary" means.

Secondly, they have failed to repudiate the arbitrary dictatorial rule that allows life and death issues to be settled by a handful of men--whether by one or a half-dozen matters not to the Russian peasant.

The 20th Congress in its unreal and sheeplike unanimity was an example of the fact that the present 4, 5, or 6-man leadership intends to permit little real debate and criticism of basic policy. Not one voice was raised to protest the decree designed to force the peasants on the collective farms to devote all their efforts to the collective by severely limiting the time allowed for work on their private plots. The widespread opposition to this decree that must exist among the Russian farmers went unrepresented and unheard as the last Party Congress proceeded to rubber-stamp every resolution put before it.

Thirdly, whatever improvements have been made in assuring the personal security and welfare of the individual Russian, that progress is dependent on the whim of the Presidium, (popularly known as the Politburo). The stick can be used later if the carrot doesn't work.

What we now have is a kind of "mutual protective association" among a few men who suffered under Stalin so long that they are willing to cooperate to keep the full police power of the state out of the hands of any one man.

There is no hint that any ordinary Russian who tries to dissent against the regime will escape the wrath of Serov's gunmen any more than he would have escaped when Beria was alive. If necessary to preserve their own skins these men might return to unrestricted terror like ducks to water. It was their native element for years.

The final and real test of the intentions of the Soviet leaders will remain their willingness to accept those basic institutional changes that can give the Russian people and the world in general genuine assurance that a one-man or three or four-man dictatorship cannot again plot in secret the massive domestic or international crimes of the recent past.

In the end, opposition parties, an independent judiciary and a free press are the only real safeguards against successive dictators, each with his own power lust and a new cult of personality.

The problems which this right-about-face presents for the world-wide Communist movement both within and outside of the USSR are immense. Here are a few of them:

Stalin was not only the dictator of his country for more than two decades, he was also hailed as its great military leader in war, its prophet and the interpreter of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. His writing, particularly the problems of Leninism and the Short History of the Communist Party, are scattered in tens of millions of copies throughout the Communist world. It will be years before they can be removed from circulation. In fact, all Soviet history for the past thirty years must now be rewritten. They won't be able to handle this quite as they did in the case of Beria.

Here they sent to all holders of the Soviet Encyclopedia Britannica instructions to excise the pages praising Beria and insert a puffed-up story on the Bering Straits (which fitted in in proper alphabetical order).

Stalin's name is on thousands of streets and squares. Cities and towns bear his name throughout the Communist world. For the people of the Soviet Union, Stalingrad stands as the symbol of their victory over Hitlerism. Will his name remain here and elsewhere or will the attempt be made to blot it out?

Stalin's henchmen were put in key positions throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet Union. They hold key places in the European satellite regimes. Each and every one of these appointees must today fear not only for his future, but for his life.

Already political idols are toppling or at least swaying in the wind from Moscow--in Bulgaria, in Hungary, in Poland. Names of former leaders who crossed Stalin are coming back into repute daily, and political circles in the Satellites are plainly in confusion and near panic trying to figure out where the line of propriety will be drawn next.

As Alfred Robens, a leader of the British Labor Party, recently remarked, "How do you correct the mistake of having shot a man? Do you restore him to the history books or give him a posthumous reward?"

The problem of justifying past crimes is especially difficult in the foreign Communist parties, such as those in France and Italy, where local leaders clung to Stalin's coat-tails and did his bidding without having the excuse of the pistol at their head. These men could have denounced Stalin's crimes earlier and lived--unlike the men in Moscow.

Why did they not do so? This is the question we ought to keep asking every Italian tempted to play ball with Togliatti.

And what about the reputation of Trotsky, a key Stalinist victim, still on the Soviet blacklist? Here and there, in places as far distant from each other as Ceylon and Bolivia, his followers are meeting to stage a comeback, and the view is being tolerated, at least, in the Satellites that he was not a traitor but merely a misguided and erroneous would-be leader.

And what about the numerous violations of those international agreements signed by Stalin. Was he a "devil" when he made them, or when he broke them, or both?

The Soviet people well remember that Stalin, himself, started as one of a triumvirate not very different from the collective leadership of which the Soviet leaders now boast. How can the Soviet people, themselves, be sure that this small group of men in the Politburo who exercise complete and arbitrary control over the lives of all the peoples of the USSR will not, in the course of a few years, again lead to a personal dictatorship with all the vices that they now attribute to Stalinism? Is it not the system itself, not the "cult of personality," that breeds tyranny and cruelty and ends in the revolution devouring its own children?

And, finally, is it not possible that the Soviet people with the leaven of education they are receiving will demand some decisive share in the selection of their own leadership and some checks and balances against the danger of tyrannical dictatorship and the "cult of personality?"

All Marxists have been trained in the dogma that human beings are the products of their environment. Might not Soviet Marxists begin to think there is something wrong with a political environment in which, over the years, an incredible percentage of the most influential leaders -- including Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Beria -- and now Stalin, have turned out to be criminals? Might not the Soviet people, and even some of their present or future leaders come to believe that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

In Moscow the pictures of Stalin are gradually disappearing. I am told that the Red Army Theater has solved the problem of filling the space formerly occupied by an enormous portrait in an ingenious way that may be symbolic. On the wall where Stalin's picture used to hang is now a huge mirror. Any ambitious leader can see himself in Stalin's place. Might this not prove to be the curse of the Stalinist system -- one which cannot be easily escaped by pious resolves?

The only element of power in the Soviet Union which is not directly implicated in the excesses and atrocities of Stalin, namely the military leadership, may have something to say about all this. While there is nothing concrete to suggest it now, some day a "man on horseback" might fancy himself in that mirror.

When the present Soviet leaders took the risks involved in their present policy, they must have carefully weighed the consequences. They must have realized the grave issues it would raise in the communist world outside of the USSR, among the party faithful in every free country, and among their own peoples.

Abroad they probably hoped there would be some counter balancing advantages. If it would bring about a feeling of relaxation in the Free World, defensive rearmament here and among our allies might slow down, defensive alliances might tend to weaken, the possibility of peaceful coexistence, for which everyone yearns, might be more and more accepted. All this they hoped would give them time to build up their own strength, economic and military. If we are naive, then the Soviet Union may get some international benefits from their present tactics.

But there is another side to the picture which bears pondering. The Soviet leaders may have had no real alternative and took the course which they felt held out the best chance of keeping their own power. The Kremlin leaders, as I mentioned, were under heavy domestic pressures to do something to persuade their people that a new era was in the making. During recent years the leavening process of education has developed the critical faculties of millions of Russians. The Kremlin can no longer sell the old line to all of their people. They must now rewrite not only the history of Stalin but rewrite the story they have been telling their people about the outside world.

These leaders -- Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan, Kaganovich -- have got over the hump of Stalin's death without losing their grip on his power. They profess a great deal of confidence in their ability to perpetuate the system of collective dictatorship they have instituted by basing it more broadly on the top layer of elite party managers, generals, engineers and intellectuals who have a stake in the Soviet regime.

Only time can tell whether the present leaders with their past close association with Stalinism really can do this and make the Soviet dictatorship work without going much farther and giving their people something more than mere lip service in the direction of the right to free speech, free worship, and protection for the individual from arbitrary action.

Possibly what we are seeing will end up as a temporary period of attempted fraud on the Russian people, a cloak to sell them a collective dictatorship as against a personal dictatorship. Possibly it is a first hesitant step toward giving a greater number of the Russian people a chance to share in the decisions which shape their destinies. I am sure the Russian leaders themselves do not know how their effort to "de-Stalinize" the Soviet Union will turn out. I am also sure they would be dismayed if they thought they were paving the way for the establishment in Russia of what we could call a decent and responsible government.

The Communists, despite their self confidence, do not and will not control the fate of mankind. In the face of firm Free World resistance to their international barbarities and exposure of their political frauds and malpractices, at home and abroad, and under the pressure of their own

people, there may be a gradual move toward more normal modes of life and behavior. If so, then hopes of world peace will be given a mighty impulse forward. This possibility the Free World must watch prayerfully, alert to opportunities for peace provided by progress in this direction. We must be equally alert to perceive and denounce the dangers implicit in the fraud of a mere attempt to bury a shabby past.